## Sūrah Luqmān

**Central Theme and Relationship with Previous Sūrah**

Like the two previous *sūrahs* (al-'Ankabūt and al-Rūm), the Qur'ānic name of this one too is Alif Lām Mīm. This is an indication of the fact that the central theme and subject of these *sūrahs* are broadly similar. The introductory part of this *sūrah* is similar to Sūrah al-Baqarah and the Qur'ānic name of Sūrah al-Baqarah is also Alif Lām Mīm. In the introductory part of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the type of people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān and those would not were delineated. Similarly, in the introductory part of this *sūrah* too, those who will benefit from this mercy of God and those who will remain deprived of it are pointed out.

In the previous *sūrah*, it was stated that this Qur'ān is inviting people to this religion based on the nature on which God has created man. Arguments were also presented on this claim from the world around man and that within him. In this *sūrah*, besides arguments drawn from the world around man and that within him, the counsel of Luqma#n, a famous sage of Arabia is alluded to. The purpose is to explain to the Arabs that wise people of the past have also guided people in way the Prophet (sws) is guiding them today. It is evident from this that common sense is in absolute line with what the Qur'ān has mentioned and not what is advocated by the opponents of the Qur'ān. This is very clear evidence to the fact that the nature on which God has created man is precisely the one found in man today. Had this not been the case, how could these people of insight reached the facts stated by the Qur'ān.

It may be kept in mind that when western philosophers discuss morality, they base it on established universal principles founded on common sense. However, they have not been able to tell us about the origins of these established moral principles. The reason is that they want to evade the concept of a wise creator and of the nature on which God created man. The punishment that God gave them for evading this reality was that their moral philosophy was left with no

basis or foundation. All their philosophical endeavours could neither formulate a barometer for good and evil nor could they tell why man should do good and resist evil. All ideologies like good is what is useful, good is what creates happiness, hedonism, obligation as end to itself they invented all proved to be baseless and they themselves proved them to be unfounded. The Qur'ān has not only based its morality but also the whole of religion on nature and since this nature is made by a wise creator, it is not permitted that people deviate from it. He who deviates from his nature, will lead himself to ruin and anger his creator. Man's nature is a treasure trove of guidance; yet he can deviate from the path of truth by being influenced by his environment. He can also go against his nature by misusing his authority. For this reason, the Almighty has explicated all the details of guidance found in human nature through His prophets and books so that no confusion may remain for anyone. It would provide opportunity to everyone to tread the path of guidance found in his nature and attain success in this world and God's pleasure in the next.

As referred to earlier, the reason that the Qur'ān has referred to the wisdom of the sage Luqmān in this *sūrah* is that it wants to present the evidence in its favour of a person who has reflected on the realities of life. Moreover, he was a person who was regarded highly by the opponents of the Qur'ān. At the same time, this *sūrah* presents the arguments in favour of the Qur'ān's call drawn from the world around and within man in a new style.

**Analysis of the *Sūrah***

**Verses (1-11):** This book is a wise book which has been revealed for the guidance of people and as a mercy to them. However, only those people will benefit from it who keep alive the traits of their nature and also make use of them. As for those who give preference to the nonsensical talk of its opponents over the Qur'ān and also arrogantly evade it, they shall be meted out a humiliating punishment as a result of this arrogance. Only the believers will succeed. This is a certain promise of God because whatever is in the heavens and the earth and in between them are creatures of God. No one else has any say in it. Those who claim so, should show what their deities have created.

**Verses (9-12):** A reference to the counsel of Luqmān for his son. The purpose is to show that the person whose wisdom the Arabs were proud of and whose traditions existed in their literature, he too

counseled his on to things which this wise book is counseling them to. This shows that common sense is in harmony with the Qur'ān's call. Those who are opposing it are in fact waging war against common sense and human nature. There is a special warning in this for people who in those times were oppressing their sons to leave Islam, as has been mentioned in Sūrah 'Ankabūt. It is as if the Qur'ān is showing that the very things regarding which Luqmān affectionately counseled his son to adopt are the ones in which today's fathers are persecuting their sons.

**Verses (20-24):** What is said in the introductory part of the *sūrah* is substantiated: all internal and external favours enjoyed by man are actually gifts of God and no one can deny this fact. However, in spite of this, many foolish people are disputing the concept of monotheism whereas they neither have any argument in their favour nor any guidance from a sage or a prophet or the light of a divine scripture. When they are asked to follow the Book of God, they arrogantly reply that they will continue to follow the ways of their forefathers even if their forefathers followed Satan. The strong rope of God's attachment is only in the hands of those who follow the Book revealed by Him. This is because the judgement of all matters finally rests with God. At the end of this section, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not fret over such arrogant people. One day God will show them the consequences of their deeds.

**Verses (25-30):** Opponents of the Qur'ān are refuted by referring to their objections: they are evading the necessary consequences of what they believe in. They confess that the heavens and the earth are created by God. So the question is that when He is the creator, how can someone else be worthy of worship and gratitude? Everything is in His hands and He does not need anyone. He does not require the help of anyone and He has all worthy attributes. Hence no one's intercession is needed to win His favour. There are so many signs of His power and wisdom found in this universe that if all the trees become pens and all the seas together with seven more become ink, it is still not possible to note down all these signs. It is as easy for Him to create every human being as it is easy for Him to create a single soul. The night and day are subservient to Him, and He is fully aware of everything. If anyone else had a say in the matters of this universe, it would be have been totally destroyed.

**Verses (31-34):** The opponents of the Qur'ān are warned: should they be those who became happy in one instant and hopeless in another? On the contrary, they should show patience in strife and gratitude in comfort. The favours they enjoy today entail that they show gratitude to God and should remember the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his son nor a son to his father. The Day of Judgement is bound to come. It cannot be denied merely on the basis that its time of arrival is not known. There are so many realities of life whose time of arrival is not known to anyone, yet no person can deny them. Real knowledge rests with God alone.

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**Section 1: Verses (1-11)**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿۱﴾ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ ہُدًی وَّ رَحۡمَۃً لِّلۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقِیۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوۃَ وَ یُؤۡتُوۡنَ
الزَّکٰوۃَ وَ ہُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ ہُمۡ یُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ اُولٰٓئِکَ عَلٰی ہُدًی مِّنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ وَ اُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ مَنۡ یَّشۡتَرِیۡ لَہۡوَ الۡحَدِیۡثِ لِیُضِلَّ عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ بِغَیۡرِ عِلۡمٍ ۖ وَّ یَتَّخِذَہَا ہُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ لَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ
مُّہِیۡنٌ ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِ اٰیٰتُنَا وَلّٰی مُسۡتَکۡبِرًا کَاَنۡ لَّمۡ یَسۡمَعۡہَا کَاَنَّ فِیۡۤ اُذُنَیۡہِ وَقۡرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرۡہُ بِعَذَابٍ
اَلِیۡمٍ ﴿۷﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَہُمۡ جَنّٰتُ النَّعِیۡمِ ﴿۸﴾ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَا ؕ وَعۡدَ اللّٰہِ حَقًّا ؕ وَ ہُوَ
الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۹﴾ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَیۡرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوۡنَہَا وَ اَلۡقٰی فِی الۡاَرۡضِ رَوَاسِیَ اَنۡ تَمِیۡدَ بِکُمۡ وَ بَثَّ فِیۡہَا
مِنۡ کُلِّ دَآبَّۃٍ ؕ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنۡۢبَتۡنَا فِیۡہَا مِنۡ کُلِّ زَوۡجٍ کَرِیۡمٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ ہٰذَا خَلۡقُ اللّٰہِ فَاَرُوۡنِیۡ
مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ ؕ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ فِیۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ﴿۱۱﴾

This is Alif Lām Mīm. These are the verses of the Wise Book, revealed as guidance and mercy for those who are thorough. For those who are diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and it these people who have conviction in the Hereafter. It is they who are on the guidance provided by their Lord and it is they who will succeed. (1-5)

There are some among people who give preference to absurd things to lead astray from the path of God, without any knowledge and make fun of the revelations of God. It is for such people that there is a humiliating punishment. And when Our revelations are recited to them, they arrogantly evade them as if they never heard them: as

though their ears were deaf. So give them glad tidings of a woeful punishment. But those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, for them shall be gardens of delight, where they shall dwell forever. This promise of God is bound to be fulfilled: And He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (6-9)

He made the heavens without pillars that you can see, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it slither away together with you. And He dispersed upon it all kinds of living beings. And We sent down water from the sky; thus We created various sorts of beneficial things. (10)

All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in a manifest error! (11)

**Explanation**

[1] الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾

A comprehensive discussion on the isolated letters (*ḥurūf-i muqaṭṭa'āt*) was done in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

[2] تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾

The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun تِلْكَ is الٓمّٓ. This is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. The implication is that this *sūrah* is based on the revelations of Book replete with wisdom; however, not every person truly recognizes pearls of wisdom. Only those will duly recognize and value it who are مُحْسِنِ. This word refers to people who do everything in a befitting way and who have correctly used their powers of intellect and kept alive the traits of their nature and whatever step they took was taken to the best of their insight. The verse states that it is for such people that the revelations of God are guidance and mercy. They will receive guidance from these revelations in this world and they will become a source of mercy and blessings for them in the next. I have already discussed the word مُحْسِنِ at an appropriate place of this exegesis and it also occurs in verse 22 ahead. God willing, there it shall be explained further. It is evident

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm.

2. These are the verses of the Wise Book, revealed as guidance and mercy for those are thorough.

from this verse that if these people are not giving due regard to this Book, then this is not because the Book itself has some flaw – rather it is these people whose nature is perverted. Hence, the Prophet (sws) should not become dejected by the attitude of these people.

الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾[3]

This verse expresses the qualities of the upright and thorough people referred to in the previous verse. As a result, people who in those times in whom these traits manifested themselves have come to the fore. It is stated that it is these people who are diligent in their prayer and vigilant in giving *zakāh* and have conviction in the Hereafter.

The words وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ highly praise these believers. In other words, it is these people who are fully convinced of the Hereafter. It is the consequence of this conviction that they have the urge to be diligent in their prayer and *zakāh.* It is evident from this that those who are indifferent to the prayer and *zakāh* are in fact deprived of the conviction in the Hereafter. And if they make this claim, then they are lying about it.

اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾[4]

This verse states that it is these people who in this world are on the right path and it is these who will succeed in the Hereafter. All the rest are in error and shall be flung into Hell in the Hereafter.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿۶﴾[5]

The word إِشْتَرَاء also means to give preference, as has been explained at relevant places in this exegesis. The expression لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ is much similar in construction to زخرف القول used in the Qur'ān

3. For those who are diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and it these people who have conviction in the Hereafter.

4. It is they who are on the guidance provided by their Lord and it is they who will succeed.

5. There are some among people who give preference to absurd things to lead astray from the path of God, without any knowledge and make fun of the revelations of God. It is for such people that there is a humiliating punishment.

(6:112). Here this expression is used in opposition to the revelations of the wise Book. Hence it would refer to all those things which the miscreants of those times would spread in order to lead people away from the revelations of God. The Qur'ān wanted people to face the real facts of life but its opponents wanted its addressees to remain entangled in the foolish things they were occupied with. The verse refers to this situation and expresses wonder. The implication is that the Almighty revealed a Book replete with wisdom in order to guide people. However, such is the pathetic situation of people that they are giving preference to those baseless concepts which provide corroboration to their desires and innovations.

The word علم in لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا means "a clear proof or argument." This word also occurs in verse 30 ahead. It will be further explained there. The implication is that the evil efforts of the miscreants are meant to stop people from God's way. The fact of the matter is that they have no sound proof of the path they are treading by leaving the path of God and which they also want people to tread. In spite of this, such is their audacity that they make fun of God's revelations and provide exaggerations to support their baseless notions.

Consider next the words: اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ. Earlier it was stated about the believers that "they are on guidance and they shall succeed." Now, these words, in contrast, state the fate of people who in opposition to the wise verses of the Qur'ān were busy in spreading their baseless notions, erroneous concepts and religious innovations. The words say that a very humiliating punishment awaits them. This is because in opposition to the truth their bias is towards arrogance and the punishment of arrogance before God is humiliation. It should be kept in mind that punishments are of various types. Though each punishment is a punishment – and may God protect everyone from it – but the worst punishment is the one which humiliates and disgraces people.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا وَلّٰى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَاَنَّ فِيْٓ اُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۝[6]

This is a picture of the arrogance that has made these people

6. And when Our revelations are recited to them, they arrogantly evade them as if they never heard them: as though their ears were deaf. So give them glad tidings of a woeful punishment.

worthy of this humiliating punishment. The verse states that such is the situation of these people that when God's revelations are recited to them, they turn their backs with great arrogance and walk away, as if they did not even hear them and as if both their ears are deaf. In other words, they regard God's revelations to be totally insignificant and not worthy to pay heed to. The verse states that if their arrogance has increased so much that God's revelations are not worthy enough to pay heed to, then the Prophet (sws), on God's behalf, should sound them glad tidings of a painful doom. The implication is that if this matter relates only to indifference, it can be reformed through reminding and admonishing them. However, if they show arrogance even after being reminded and admonished, then this ailment cannot be cured. Such people will become the fuel of Hell.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ ۝٨ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝٩[7]

These verses, in contrast, state the reward of people who profess faith in God's revelations and befittingly follow them in their lives. It is said that for such people are gardens of bliss in which they will dwell forever. The words وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا mean that this is a certain promise of God that is bound to be fulfilled. The style of double emphasis found in this sentence has been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The reason for this double emphasis was that in verse 6 earlier, it has been said that these arrogant people make fun of God's revelations. It is obvious that this ridicule was directed at those verses of the Qur'ān in which the helpless and poor among the Muslims of those times were given glad tidings of an eternal kingdom. It was this reason that entailed that it be said with full stress and emphasis that if these people want to ridicule this aspect, then let them do so; however, the believers should rest assured that this promise of God will be fulfilled.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ substantiate the certainty of God's promise through His attributes. The implication is that if God does not punish the arrogant and the oppressors and not reward the believers and the

7. But those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, for them shall be gardens of delight, where they shall dwell forever. This promise of God is bound to be fulfilled: And He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

righteous, it would mean that He is neither powerful (الْعَزِيْزُ) nor wise (الْحَكِيْمُ). On the other hand, God forbid, He is a helpless and feeble being who has created a purposeless and meaningless world. The fact is that this is self-evidently untrue. I have explained this style of reasoning at various places in this exegesis. Readers should content themselves with this brief allusion.

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿۱۰﴾[8]

This verse directs attention to those signs of this universe observing which even a person of average intellect will be compelled to confess that the creator of this universe is الْعَزِيْزُ ie. has power and dominance over everything, and together with power every action of His reflects His immense wisdom as well. The verse states that it is God's power and wisdom that He has raised high this great roof of the heavens without any visible pillars. At the same time, He has set mountains firmly on the earth so that the earth might not reel away to one side with its inhabitants. Moreover, below this roof and above this earth, God has spread living beings of various sorts and to nourish and nurture them has rained down water from the skies. Through this water sprung forth many beneficial things from the earth.

In the expression بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا, the تَرَوْنَهَا qualifies عَمَدٍ. In other words, this great roof has been raised high by its great creator with pillars but such is the miracle of His power, wisdom and creativity that these pillars are not visible. He has bound together the various portions of this universe with such laws of gravity which are seen only by Him.

In the expression زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ the precise linguistic meaning of the word كَرِيْمٍ is "beneficial." This expression alludes to God's mercy and providence coupled with His power already alluded to. The implication is that after building this enormous palace and this pillar-less castle, He has provided its inhabitants with huge amounts of

8. He made the heavens without pillars that you can see, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it slither away together with you. And He dispersed upon it all kinds of living beings. And We sent down water from the sky; thus We created various sorts of beneficial things.

beneficial things.

هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ۭ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١١﴾[9]

The implication of this verse is that all the above pointed things have been made by God and the addressees of this verse also admit this fact. They are now asked that what has been made by those who they worship besides God. What is the feat these deities have accomplished that they have regarded them to be partners in the rights of God.

The words بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ express pity on such people by addressing them in an indirect way: these people who have transgressed against their souls do not have any reason to regard such deities as partners of God; they are engulfed in manifest error.

**Section II: Verses (12-19)**

The succeeding verses refer to the wisdom of Luqmān and the advise he gave to his obedient son. The purpose of citing it, as alluded to earlier, is to show to the Arabs that their own sages and wise men taught them the very things which this Book of wisdom is teaching them. However, it is the wretchedness and deprivation of these people proud of blindly following their forefathers who themselves blindly followed Satan, yet they are not prepared to benefit from the wisdom of those forefathers who seriously reflected on the realities of life and through their words and deeds left behind very noble traditions. Such was the consequence of this foolishness of these people that they cruelly punish their children for doing things which Luqmān in his times earnestly taught to his child.

Who was Luqmān? Some people regard him to belong to Abyssinia. However, in my opinion, this is not correct. The historian Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq says that he belonged to the lineage of Abraham (sws). This opinion also does not seem to be sound. Among the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* poets Ṭarfah ibn ‘Abd and Salmā ibn

9. All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in a manifest error!

Rabī‘ah have mentioned him and his tribe in their poetry. It is evident from these poems that Luqmān and his people lived in Yemen in grandeur and majesty, and they were the descendents of the ‘Ād.

Some people have regarded Luqmān to be a prophet. However, the opinion of the majority is that he was not a prophet. He was, in fact, a sage. It comes to my mind that some poets have also referred in their poetry to this counsel mentioned in the Qur’ān. However, while writing this exegesis I do not have the relevant poetry anthologies; hence, I cannot say anything with certainty in this regard.

Some historians regard him to be a king. Whether this is true or not, he does seem to be a chief. The way the *jāhiliyyah* poets have mentioned him shows that he was the patriarchal head of his tribe in Yemen. It is also evident from the advice and counsel he gave to his son that they were imparted to him at the time when he was being crowned as the next tribal chief. This shall be explained later. Readers are advised to study the verses in the light of this background.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿۱۲﴾
وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ
بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ؕ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاِنْ
جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۪ وَّاتَّبِعْ
سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ
مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِيْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِي الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۶﴾ يٰبُنَيَّ
اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَلَا
تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَاقْصِدْ فِيْ
مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ ؕ اِنَّ اَنْكَرَ الْاَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيْرِ ﴿۱۹﴾

And We bestowed wisdom on Luqmān, saying: “Be grateful to God and he who remains thankful remains so for himself. And he who is ungrateful then God is self-sufficient and has all praiseworthy attributes.” (12)

And recall when Luqmān while counselling his son said: “Son! Do not associate partners with God. Indeed, polytheism is a great transgression.” (13)

And We have counselled man regarding his parents. His mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow, and he is weaned after two years. [We counselled him:] "Show gratitude to Me and to your parents and towards Me is the return. If they force you to associate anything with Me about which you have no proof, do not listen to them and be kind to them in this world, and follow the way of those who turn to Me. Then to Me shall you return, and I will inform you of what you have been doing." (14-15)

My son, if an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing. (16)

My son! Be diligent in the prayer, enjoin good, and forbid evil and beare with patience any calamity that befalls you. Indeed, these things are from among the matters of endurance. (17)

And do not treat men with disdain, nor walk arrogantly. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited. And be modest in your gait and keep your voice low. Indeed, the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass.

**Explanation**

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿١٢﴾[10]

The first consequence of wisdom is being grateful to God. The foremost effect of this treasure bestowed to a person by God is that he becomes thankful to his Lord. It is this gratitude which is the basis of all the rights of God and all the rights of human beings. I have written in detail on this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah Fātiḥah. Useful references to it have also been made while discussing the accounts of David (sws), Solomon (sws) and Dhū al-Qarnayan. It is evident from this that the first sign from which a wise person can be recognized is that he shows gratitude to God. Without it, he is totally hollow even if he is regarded to be a pioneer of knowledge and philosophy.

Consider next the verses وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ. They form an appropriate on the spot insertion. The implication is that no one should think that if the Almighty has asked His creatures

10. And We bestowed wisdom on Luqmān, saying: "Be grateful to God and he who remains thankful remains so for himself. And he who is ungrateful then God is self-sufficient and has all praiseworthy attributes."

to be grateful or likes this attitude, then there is some benefit for Himself in this. If the Almighty recommends this, then it is only for the benefit of people themselves. He who remains thankful to God will see that God's favours on Him will increase in this world and the next. As far as God Himself is concerned, He is totally self-sufficient. Neither is the gratitude of a person beneficial to Him nor is someone's ingratitude harmful to Him. At the same time, He is حَمِيْدٌ (Ḥamīd) which means that He possesses all lofty attributes and all these attributes are personal. No one can increase or decrease them. One aspect of this attribute is that whether any person duly values God's favours or not, he is not deprived by God of His favours and sustenance. This attribute is referred to in verse 26 ahead as well. It shall be explained there further.

وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳﴾[11]

Just as the foremost consequence of wisdom is gratefulness to God, similarly the true essence of gratitude is abstinence from polytheism. A person receives all favours from God; hence, just as it is essential that he be grateful to God, it is equally essential that he should not ascribe the favours of God to others. If a person receives any benefit from others, it is at the behest of God. Hence, it is only God Who should be thanked. Others have to be shown gratitude in subservience to God. The right of God is the greatest. If anyone associates others in this right, he is guilty of usurping the greatest of rights – and there is nothing more unjust than this.

It needs to be appreciated here that all these things were said by Luqmān when he was counseling his son. This shows the importance of the occasion and what is said itself: the statements were not given in a casual way; on the contrary, they were said on a specific occasion in an elaborate way as advice to his son and stressed upon him to strongly adhere to them. The purpose is to direct the attention of the addressees of the Qur'ān what a wise father teaches his son and what attitude is adopted by these people about their children – people who revered Luqmān.

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11. And recall when Luqmān while counselling his son said: "Son! Do not associate partners with God. Indeed, polytheism is a great transgression."

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ؕ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۙ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۟ وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[12]

These two verses are insertions from God within the verses of counsel from Luqmān. He had directed his son to be grateful to God but he did not mention his own right in this regard out of modesty. After mentioning the right of God, he moved to the mention of the Day of Judgement. This he stated out of respect and this only befitted his humble nature. However, after God, as per the norms of human nature, the greatest right on a person is that of the parents. For this reason, the Almighty Himself filled this vacuum left by Luqmān. The verses state that God has guided people about their parents. This guidance has already been mentioned in verse 8 of Sūrah ‘Ankabūt and also in Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl. At these places, I have explained that all prophets and books of God have unanimously taught people that after the right of God, it is essential to treat parents with kindness. Here, this teaching is mentioned in the next part of the verse اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَ لِوَالِدَيْكَ (that be grateful to Me and your parents). In other words, while being grateful to Him, the Almighty has also directed people to show gratitude to their parents. It is evident from this that after God, it is the parents who have the greatest right on a person. This is because it is they who bring him into existence and nourish him. There is no greater a right on a person regarding his fellow brethren than his parents. However, this right relates to gratitude and service and not to worshipping them. It has been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis that the real essence of gratitude is fulfillment of promises. If this fulfillment does not exist, then expressing gratitude through the tongue is an absolutely baseless thing.

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12. And We have counselled man regarding his parents. His mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow, and he is weaned after two years. [We counselled him:] “Show gratitude to Me and to your parents and towards Me is the return. If they force you to associate anything with Me about which you have no proof, do not listen to them and be kind to them in this world, and follow the way of those who turn to Me. Then to Me shall you return, and I will inform you of what you have been doing.”

The words وَاِنۡ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنۡ تُشۡرِكَ بِىۡ مَا لَيۡسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ فَلَا تُطِعۡهُمَا وَصَاحِبۡهُمَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا مَعۡرُوۡفًا express the fact that if the parents stress upon their children to associate anything as a partner with God without any knowledge, then they do not have this right. It is mandatory on the children to refuse obedience to them in this regard. I have discussed at many places in this exegesis the fact that polytheism has no arguments to substantiate itself. This is a permanent trait of polytheism because till now the proponents of polytheism have not been able to present any argument to corroborate it. On the other hand, every polytheist believes in God.

The words وَصَاحِبۡهُمَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا state that though children must not listen to their parents if they force them to polytheism but they still must treat them kindly in this world. Their needs should be met as far as possible. Children should also continue to pray to God for their guidance. Abraham (sws) continued to pray for his father until God stopped him from doing so. Total severing of relations with parents who are disbelievers is only allowed when a Muslim society in its collective capacity declares its acquittal from them and from their nation. This aspect has already been explained in Sūrah Tawbah.

Here one thing that needs consideration is that as far as gratitude and service are concerned, the children are directed to do so in the case of both the father and the mother. However, as far as sacrifices and labours are concerned, only those of the mother are enumerated. No reference is given to any sacrifice of the father. The words are: حَمَلَتۡهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهۡنًا عَلٰى وَهۡنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِىۡ عَامَيۡنِ (his mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow). Here all the three phases of pregnancy, birth and suckling are referred to (though the mention of birth is suppressed because it is understood) and all these phases relate to the mother. It is evident from this that a mother has a greater right on her children than a father. It is on this verse that the narrative of the Prophet (sws) is based which says that the right of the mother is thrice that of a father.[13]

The words اِلَىَّ الۡمَصِيۡرُ warn people that everyone should bear in mind that at last finally everyone has to turn to God. If anyone shows any

13. Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), 1974, (no. 2548).

slackness in showing gratitude to God and in fulfilling the rights of the parents, then he will be held accountable before God for this attitude.

The words وَّ اتَّبِعۡ سَبِيۡلَ مَنۡ اَنَابَ اِلَىَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ further stress upon the children that besides not obeying their parents in matters of polytheism they at all cost must follow the way of those who are tuned to God and not those who have left the path of God even if they are their parents. In Sūrah ‘Ankabūt, the statement of the parents about their children and those subservient to them has been cited thus: اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطَايَاكُم (۱۲:۲۹) (keep following Our path and We are responsible for bearing your burden, (29:12)). The verse under discussion criticizes this notion that it is not permissible to follow anyone who invites people to a path which is against the path of God. Only those people must be followed who follow God.

The words ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ are addressed to both parents and the children and has the element of both a warning and assurance in them. The implication is that one day every person will return to God, and he will be shown by God all the deeds he had done. If some parents by misusing the right granted to them by God force their children to abandon the path of God, they will be punished for it. On the other hand, if the children fully recognized the right of God together with the right of their parents and adhered to it in a steadfast way, they will be abundantly rewarded for this courage.

يٰبُنَىَّ اِنَّهَاۤ اِنۡ تَكُ مِثۡقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنۡ خَرۡدَلٍ فَتَكُنۡ فِىۡ صَخۡرَةٍ اَوۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يَاۡتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيۡفٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۶﴾[14]

After the intervening verses from God, the counsel of Luqmān resumes from here. Earlier, Luqmān had urged his son to abstain from polytheism and to adhere to monotheism. It has also been explained at an appropriate instance in this exegesis that on the belief of monotheism rests all other beliefs. After monotheism, the second basic belief is that of the hereafter. The verse under discussion mentions that part of his counsel that relates to the hereafter. He

14. My son, if an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing.

states: My son, if a good or evil deed of the size of a mustard seed is done by someone on a mountain or its passes or in the unfathomable atmosphere of the heavens or in the depths of the earth, wherever it is, God will it bring forth on the Day of Judgement. This is because God is very Discerning and all-Knowing.

It may be kept in mind that it is because of a lack of knowledge about the attributes of God because of which nations have been misled about monotheism and got involved in polytheism. It was this lack of knowledge that also accounted for many erroneous concepts about the Hereafter. For this reason, Luqmān reminded his son about the wise teachings of monotheism and the hereafter to fully set right his son's concepts about them.

The pronoun in اِنَّهَآ is the pronoun of *shā'n*. In such situations, a speaker uses a pronoun for a thing in his mind. Here this is antecedent is "knowledge of the size of the mustard seed." It is in deference to حَبَّةٍ that the feminine pronoun is used.

It not essential to regard صَخْرَة to mean "a stone." It can also refer to a mountain and its passes and this would be in conformity with linguistic principles of Arabic. I have translated this word keeping in view this fact. Al-Ṭabarī has also cited that one group of people interpret this word in this meaning.[15]

يٰبُنَيَّ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۷﴾[16]

After teaching his son to show gratitude to God, this verse teaches him the results of this gratitude that should arise in a person's life. The first of these is the prayer. It is the foremost and the greatest manifestation of gratitude to God. All prophets of God and all divine religions unanimously have taught people to pray. The precise translation would be: "O my son! Be diligent in the prayer." It means that he should not only adhere to the prayer himself, but make arrangements for others also that they are able to offer the prayer and he should also urge others to prayer.

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15. See: Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 21 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1405 AH), 72-73.

16. My son! Be diligent in the prayer, enjoin good, and forbid evil and bear with patience any calamity that befalls you. Indeed, these things are from among the matters of endurance.

The words وَ اْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ express the second aspect of showing gratitude to God. It connects a person to his brethren. The prayer, on the other hand, connects a person to his Lord. The word مَعْرُوْف encompasses all things that relate to fulfillment of rights; for example, spending in the way of God, helping orphans, the destitute, neighbours and all other people in need and similar acts of kindness which are well known in every good society and which every person grateful to his Lord tries to do or should do.

The words وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ direct his son to abstain from things which are opposite to the *ma'rūf* (مَعْرُوْف). These, for example, include stinginess, usurpation of rights, injustice, breaking promises, conceit etc.

The words وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ imply that enjoining good and forbidding evil is not an easy way. When he starts to do these things, he will find that difficulties and hardships facing him at every step; if he does not exercise patience, he will not be able to take a single step ahead. If he has to succeed in this test, he must face all adversities with patience and perseverance.

The sentence اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ emphasizes what is said above: these tasks cannot be carried out half-heartedly. Only those people can accomplish them who stand up with full force and perseverance and put their life at stake to succeed in them. In Sūrah al-'Aṣr, it is precisely for this reason that showing steadfastness and patience on the truth is mentioned.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ ۝۱۸[17]

The expression تصعیر خد means to show indifference to people because of arrogance and haughtiness.

The word لِلنَّاسِ refers to the masses in particular, the poor and needy who are looked down upon by the rich.

In the earlier verses, the factors that make showing gratitude to God incumbent upon human beings were mentioned. Coming up is the mention of things which are contrary to this gratitude. As delineated at another place, humility is the manifestation of gratitude

17. And do not treat men with disdain, nor walk arrogantly. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited.

and the opposite of humility is arrogance. People who are mean become arrogant when they receive favours and look down upon those who are not their equals. Luqmān has stopped his son to adopt this attitude.

The words وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا also occur in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. There a further admonition is sounded thus: (۳۷:۱۷) لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا – meaning that however much a person tries to walk tall in this arrogance, he should not forget that he cannot pierce the earth or climb as high as the mountains. And what is the meaning of showing arrogance in the kingdom of God Whose signs of power and exaltedness everyone witnesses? The arrogance and conceit of a person is evident from his face and neck and also from his gait. Luqmān has stopped his son from being arrogant in both ways.

The words إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ are an admonition and a very strong one too. They mean that God does not like a person who is arrogant and haughty. People who are rich and have high status and who think that this is because of their own ability and entitlement and not a favour of God end up being arrogant instead of being grateful to God. Luqmān has informed his son of precisely this danger. He has asked him to regard favours to be God's gift and test and should not invite God's wrath by becoming conceited because of them.

وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾ [18]

Stylistically, the earlier verse was a collection of forbiddance ordinances. In this verse, Luqmān has directed his son in a positive way to adopt humility: he should be very humble in his gait instead of walking in an arrogant way and be polite in his voice instead of being rude and discourteous. The occurrence of the word مِنْ here evidences the fact that God has not created mankind with the same pitch in their voices. He has given them the ability to raise this pitch and also lower it when needed. So he should use this ability as per this need and not always burden the ears of people with his voice. The words إِنَّ أَنكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ are meant to stop people from being coarse and impolite in their tone: when God has created them in the

18. And be modest in your gait and keep your voice low. Indeed, the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass.

best of moulds and also blessed them with quality of eloquent speech, why should they fall from this status and become donkeys. It is their utter misfortune if they do this.

Though these pieces of advice from Luqmān are effective for every person; yet, they carry special significance for those who are in the position of leadership and have political authority. For this reason, as pointed out earlier, Luqmān was not merely a sage, he was a sage who was a ruler as well. He held political authority among his people. The advice given by him here to his son was meant to make him understand the responsibilities of leadership. Luqmān was not a prophet; however he does have a general resemblance with the prophet David (sws).

## Section III Verses (20-34)

The foremost thing mentioned in the counsel of Luqmān is showing gratitude to God. In the succeeding verses, it is being explained as to why only God is worthy of being grateful to. What are the reasons for this found within man's being and around him? At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience and perseverance: he should now consign their matter to God; He will decide about their fate; he should not pay heed to them if they are demanding signs. There are so many signs of God around them. If all the trees of the world become pens and all the seas with an addition of another seven become ink, even then all of God's signs cannot be written. These people have a habit of breaking promises and are traitors. When they are seized by circumstances, they promise to show obedience to God but when they are given respite, they return to their rebellious ways and forget their promises. No sign can work for such people who breach promises.

At the end, people are reminded of the Hereafter. People are asked to fear the day when neither a father will be of any use to any person nor his son; each person will be accountable for his own self. If today the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement is not known, then this should not deceive anyone that its threat is a mere bluff which has no basis. There are so many things whose time of appearance is not known to anyone but no sane person can deny them. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً ؕ وَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ لَا هُدًى وَّ لَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
قَالُوْا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَ لَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَ مَنْ يُّسْلِمْ
وَجْهَهٗۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ هُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا
يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ ؕ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۲۳﴾ نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ
نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَ لَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَ لَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ
مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۷﴾
مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَ لَا بَعْثُكُمْ اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ
وَ يُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَ سَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْۤ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَ اَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الْبَاطِلُ ۙ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿۳۰﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ الْفُلْكَ
تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَ اِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ
مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ؕ وَ مَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا
كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَ اخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ ۫ وَ لَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ
عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۪ وَ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ لَئِنْ
سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ ۚ وَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْاَرْحَامِ ؕ وَ مَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ؕ وَ مَا
تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌۢ بِاَيِّ اَرْضٍ تَمُوْتُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۳۴﴾

Do you not reflect that it is God Who has put in your service what is between the heavens and the earth and completed on you both visible and hidden favours? Yet there are still some who dispute about God, without knowledge or reasoning or any illuminating scripture. And when they are invited: "Follow what God has revealed," they reply: "We will not do this; we will only follow the ways of our forefathers." Even in the case when Satan invites them to the torment of Hell? (20-21)

He who obediently turns himself to God and also leads a befitting life has indeed held on to a strong rope. And finally all things have to

return to God. And let not the disbelief of those who disbelieve grieve you. To Us shall all of them return. So, We will inform them of whatever they would have done. God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts. We will provide them for awhile. Then We will shove them towards a grievous torment. (22-24)

If you ask them: "Who has created the heavens and the earth?" they will reply: "God did." Say: "Only God is worthy of gratitude." Yes most of them do not accept this. To God belongs what the heavens and the earth contain. Indeed, God alone is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes. (25-26)

And if all the trees of the earth become pens, and the sea, with seven more of them, become ink, even then the signs of God cannot be written down. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise. (27)

To create you and give life to you is like creating and giving life to one person. Indeed, God hears and sees all. Have you not seen that it is God Who makes the night pass into the day and the day pass into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient to Him? Each is moving till an appointed time. And that God is aware of whatever you do. This is because God is the only true God and what they invoke besides Him are false. And indeed, God is the Most High, the Supreme. (28-30)

Have you not seen that it is through God's grace that a ship travels in the sea so that He make you observe His signs? Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who is steadfast and grateful. And when waves like canopies envelop them, they invoke God promising to obey Him alone. Thus, when He brings them to safety and takes them to the land, some of them remain guided and others go astray. And only they deny Our revelations who always break promises and are ungrateful. (31-32)

O People! Fear that God may seize you and fear the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor the children will be able to benefit their father. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. So the life of the world should not deceive you nor should the deceiver deceive you about God. Only God has knowledge of the Hereafter and it is He Who sends down rain, and only He knows what is in the wombs and no one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor does anyone know in which land he will die. Indeed, God is all-knowing and all-aware. (33-34)

**Explanation**

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً ؕ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ لَا هُدًى وَّ لَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾[19]

The introductory part of this *sūrah* ended on verse 11 on the words: هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in manifest error!) After that, to reinforce what was said in them the counsel of Luqmān was mentioned. He had also urged his son to remain grateful to God alone. Now, in the verse under discussion, the subject is taken up again in the light of the signs found around man. The style adopted is that of amazement and rebuke. People are asked to reflect that all objects between the heavens and the earth that are serving them are put into this service for them by God. None of them can claim about any of them that they have been created by someone other than God. So on what basis have they associated partners with Him and worshipping them?

The actual meaning of the word اَسْبَغَ in وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً is "something which is wide and expansive." From here, it came to be used in the meaning of completion and perfection. Thus the words وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ would imply that God completed His favours on them in all aspects. These favours are apparent and material as well as intellectual and spiritual. One's appearance, physique, limbs, food, clothes and other similar things have been given by God and such favours as the faculties of hearing and sight, intellect and insight as well as guidance have also been blessed by Him. No person can claim about any of these favours that they have been given to him by someone other than God or that someone else can be their source. So when it is God Who provides people with all the favours, then it should only be He Who should be worthy of being grateful to. Hence, without any basis, how can a person be associated with Him

19. Do you not reflect that it is God Who has put in your service what is between the heavens and the earth and completed on you both visible and hidden favours? Yet there are still some who dispute about God, without knowledge or reasoning or any illuminating scripture.

in this right that He alone has.

The words وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ imply that as far as God and the right to be thankful to Him are concerned, these are established facts which no one dare denies. However, it is quite amazing that there are some wretched people who dispute about monotheism even though they have neither any argument in their favour nor any guidance nor the support of any illuminating scripture. The governing noun in يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ is suppressed. The Idolaters of Arabia did not disbelieve in God. They only disputed His oneness. The words بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ refer to a lack of reasoning whether its nature is logical or scriptural. These words occur in verse 6 as well. The word عِلْم is used in contrast to conjecture as well. Hence it refers to everything through which conviction and certainty can be achieved. The word هُدًى occurs with كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ which clearly indicates that this is a case of mention of the general before the specific. God's guidance has also reached His creatures through the oral teachings of the Prophets and through radiant scriptures like the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospels and the Qur'ān as well. In my opinion, the word هُدًى refers to reasoning based on the first type of teaching. It may be kept in mind that this negation of a lack of reasoning is negation of reality. What the Idolaters would say in support of their views is cited ahead. It is of the nature of blind following and mere blind following cannot be regarded as a form of reasoning.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۲۱﴾[20]

This is an explanation of their reasoning that lacks any basis: when they are called to follow the Book of God, they reply that they will follow what they found their forefathers following and that they are not prepared to accept anything that is not in conformity with it. The verse tells the Prophet (sws) to ask them that will they still adhere to this view even if Satan is calling them to Hell by making them biased in favour of blindly following their forefathers. The implication is

20. And when they are invited: "Follow what God has revealed," they reply: "We will not do this; we will only follow the ways of our forefathers." Even in the case when Satan invites them to the torment of Hell?

that it is not necessary for the veracity of something that it has been handed from the forefathers. It is possible that just as they are blindly following the ways of their forefathers and regarding them as religion, their forefathers too blindly followed as religion whatever they received from their own forefathers. Thus it is the requirement of wisdom and of likeness for the truth that they listen to the Book of God that they are being called to, reflect on it and evaluate their beliefs and deeds in the light of the arguments it proffers. If they do not do this, they might end up in Hell as a result of this blind prejudice and following the ways of Satan. Here it needs to be kept in mind that there is great attraction in nationalism whether it relates to religion, culture or traditions. Those who raise these slogans are considered as protectors of national culture and national traditions. The masses are so enamoured by their slogans that they are not prepared to listen to anything against them, even though it may be a great truth. In my opinion the antecedent of the accusative pronoun in يَدْعُوْهُمْ is not the forefathers but the speakers of these words.

وَمَنْ يُّسْلِمْ وَجْهَهٗٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۲۲﴾[21]

The word أَسْلَمَ occurs with the preposition لِ as well as with اِلَى in the Qur'ān. While deliberating on the instances in which they are used it is evident that in the first instance it is used to connote total submission and consignment which is the essence of Islam. In the second instance, as is the case here, it is used to humbly turn towards something or someone. This "turning to" can be literal as well as metaphorical. This is because it is qualified by the word مُحْسِنٌ. The word إِحْسان means to do something with utter perfection and sincerity. This qualification also determines the real meaning of Islam: a person turns to God and does so with full devotion and perfection and with great sincerity and faithfulness. This is contrary to the hypocrites who would take the name of God but would associate partners with Him in both His being and rights and instead of God and His directives give real importance to these partners and the

21. He who obediently turns himself to God and also leads a befitting life has indeed held on to a strong rope. And finally all things have to return to God.

rituals associated with them.

It may also be noted that this verse has been revealed in response to the proponents of polytheism and of those who blindly followed their forefathers. They are told that neither will blind following avail them nor will the support of deities be of any benefit to them. On the contrary, those who turn to God with full sincerity and piety have in fact held on to a strong rope that attaches them to their Lord. This rope will prove to be a special means of association for them with Him. It shall never break.

The words وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ sound a severe warning: no one should be in the misconception that the ropes they hold on to instead of this rope will be of any avail to them. None of these false supports will be of any benefit to them because all matters will one day be presented before God. No one except Him will be the Being who everyone will have to face in the Hereafter. No other support except Him will be there for them.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ ؕ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۲۳﴾[22]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and further augments the warning found in the previous verse for his enemies. He is told that those who are today opposing his calls should not grieve him; each of them will finally encounter God. On that day, He will bring before them all their misdoings.

The last part of the verse اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ implies that no one should remain in the misconception that it is difficult for God to be aware of the words and deeds of all the people of the world. Such is the profundity of His knowledge that He is even aware of the secrets found the heart of each person.

نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

The preposition اِلٰى after the verb نَضْطَرُّ shows that the meaning of

22. And let not the disbelief of those who disbelieve grieve you. To Us shall all of them return. So, We will inform them of whatever they would have done. God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts.

23. We will provide them for awhile. Then We will shove them towards a grievous torment.

compulsion is incorporated in the expression. Examples of this style can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* as well. The implication is that no one should wrongly assume that the Hereafter is far fetched. The respite of this world is very limited. The verse states that it is of a few days. Here the Almighty will grant them His blessings for a few days and then force them to a painful torment. It needs to be kept in mind that in this world a person is bound by the laws of nature from which he cannot escape. The rich and the poor are equally helpless before them and every person has to obey these laws come what may.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾[24]

This verse states the reason that induces even the opponents to show gratitude to God. If they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth, they will answer that it is God. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that if they acknowledge God to be the creator of everything, then He alone is worthy of gratitude. How can it be logical to accede God to be the creator and then regard others to be worthy of gratitude – others who neither have any role in creating this universe nor governing it?

The words بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that what they do is not based on any reasoning. The reality is that they are not even aware of the obvious consequences of the premises they readily believe in. The result of this ignorance is that they are denying the truth they acknowledge through other deeds and beliefs.

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٦﴾[25]

This verse expresses the actual reality: whatever is in the heavens and the earth are God's creations and subservient to Him alone. Everyone is dependent on Him. It is only He who does not need anyone and has all praiseworthy attributes. For this reason, only He is solely worthy of gratitude. No one other than Him has the status to

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24. If you ask them: "Who has created the heavens and the earth?" they will reply: "God did." Say: "Only God is worthy of gratitude." Yes most of them do not accept this. To God belongs what the heavens and the earth contain.

25. Indeed, God alone is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes.

be regarded an associate to Him in this obligation.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۷﴾[26]

What is stated in this verse, has already appeared in Sūrah Kahf in the following words:

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيْ وَ لَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا (۱۰۹:۱۸)

Tell them: "If all the sea becomes ink to record the signs of my Lord, the sea will become dry before the signs of my Lord are recorded even if we bring forth as much more ink." (18:109)

The word كَلِمٰتُ refers to those signs of God which bear witness to His being and attributes and to His power and wisdom. Since every sign is a manifestation of God's command of *kun* (كُنْ) and every sign portrays itself through its very existence, the word كَلِمٰتُ is used for it. This term is in fact very meaningful for it. The implication is that God is not someone vague and unknown so that people get confused about Him and start worshiping whichever stone they come across. There are so many signs of God in this universe that if all the trees of the earth become pens and all the seas with a further addition of seven more become ink, even then all of them cannot be recorded in writing. All these signs show that the creator of this universe is powerful (عَزِيْزٌ) and wise (حَكِيْمٌ). Both these attributes of God have been explained at various instances in this exegesis. They are from among the basic attributes of God and in various verses of the Qur'ān the beliefs of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are adduced from them. These three beliefs form the basic issues discussed by the Qur'ān. In other words, every object of this universe bears witness to the power and wisdom of God and the Qur'ān invites people to what these attributes entail.

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26. And if all the trees of the earth become pens, and the sea, with seven more of them, become ink, even then the signs of God cannot be writtem down. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise.

In this verse, the word مِدَادٌ parallel to اَقْلَامٌ is suppressed. If this suppression is taken into consideration, the whole sentence would be: مَا فِی الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادٌ. Examples of such suppression have been highlighted in this exegesis at various instances.

While explaining the above cited verse of Sūrah Kahf, I have explained that what is stated is no exaggeration. It is a statement of fact. I had written there that if the sea turns into ink, then this ink will not even be sufficient to write the signs found in the sea let alone the signs of the whole universe. This earth below our feat is a very trivial part of God's unfathomable universe. However, in spite of all the advances of science, the status of all the signs and miracles man has been able to discover in it are not more than a drop in the sea.

مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَلَا بَعْثُكُمْ اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۲۸﴾[27]

Stated here is the consequence and summary of all the premises stated above. When every object of this universe bears witness that its creator is powerful and wise, then what doubt remains in the fact that God will one day raise the dead from their graves. Since He is powerful, this task is not difficult for Him at all, and since He is wise it is the requisite of His wisdom that He do this. If He does not do this, how can He be regarded as powerful, and if He does not do it in spite of being able to do it, then this is against His wisdom. This is because without the Hereafter, this world becomes a place of amusement. This fact has been explained at many instances in this exegesis.

A governing noun is suppressed in اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ. The actual impression is اِلَّا كَبَعْثِ نَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ or اِلَّا كَخَلْقِ نَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ. In other words, people should not think that who has the ability to create afresh so many creatures and gather them. The verse states that it is equal for the Almighty to create one soul and to create whole mankind. One command and one sound of the trumpet will be sufficient for the recreation of mankind. He has power over all things.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ state that the real purpose is to remind the addressees of their accountability: no one should be in the misconception that who can have knowledge about such a large

27. To create you and give life to you is like creating and giving life to one person. Indeed, God hears and sees all.

number of people so that their accountability is possible. The fact is that God hears and sees everything and nothing is beyond His knowledge and grasp. Hence, He will have no difficulty in taking account from people and in rewarding or punishing them.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوۡلِجُ الَّيۡلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُوۡلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيۡلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡۤ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾[28]

Earlier in verse 20, the Almighty directed the attention of the addressees of this verse to His signs by using the plural form (اَلَمۡ تَرَوۡا). Here precisely the same has been done in the singular form (اَلَمۡ تَرَ). It has been pointed out in this exegesis that the address by this singular form is also used for plural forms. Here each and every entity of a group of people is addressed and carries more emphasis than the plural form itself.

The verse states that it is the power and wisdom of God that He causes the night to enter into the day and vice versa. The words also portray a picture of how vigilantly, diligently, persistently and punctually the night and day chase one another.

The words وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡۤ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى refer to the fact that it is God's power and wisdom that He has put the sun and the moon into the service of man. Both follow their ordained paths very punctually. They dare not deviate from these paths or even be late by a second in the time they have to follow.

The purpose of directing attention to these signs is bring to fore the facts which have been mentioned earlier. The implication is that how do they imagine that the God Who has such profound signs of power will not be able to re-create them. Can anyone of His creations be regarded as His associate when it is He who has ordained the whole system of night and day and set the sun and moon on their ordained paths? Is there any possibility of this wrong estimation about someone who has shown such majestic signs of His providence – the wrong estimation that all this has been created without a purpose and

28. Have you not seen that it is God Who makes the night pass into the day and the day pass into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient to Him? Each is moving till an appointed time. And that God is aware of whatever you do.

that it will not culminate in a Judgement Day.

The words وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِيۡرٌ imply that if the addressees reflect on this system of providence and power, not the slightest doubt will remain that He Who is running this whole system can be unaware of them and their deeds. If He is not aware, how can He nurture and nourish them? And if He is aware, why will He not hold them responsible for observing their duties?

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡحَـقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِ الۡبَاطِلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ ﴿۳۰﴾[29]

The verse implies that the reason that this whole universe is based on such a meticulous and punctual system and the way it provides for the nourishment of its inhabitants is that only God is worthy of worship and He is the sole governor of its affairs. Had He have any partners who had a role in governing these affairs, then this whole system would have aborted as is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān by the words: لَوۡ كَانَ فِيۡهِمَاۤ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (۲۱:۲۲) (If there were other deities besides God in the heavens and the earth, there would have been disorder in both, (21:22)). For this reason, all these deities that these people worship are fabrications.

The words وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ refer to the fact that just as the system of this universe bears witness to the oneness of God, it also indicates that exalted and great is the person of God. It is a very small feat of His power that He brings forth the day from the night and lays the cover of night over the day; the sun and the moon are subservient to His command. The being who is so exalted and great is far beyond being associated partners with.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ الۡفُلۡكَ تَجۡرِىۡ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ بِنِعۡمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

This verse directs the attention of the addressees by citing the example of a ship. They should not end up loosing hope and being overcome with arrogance in such a short span of time. On the

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29. This is because God is the only true God and what they invoke besides Him are false. And indeed, God is the Most High, the Supreme.

30. Have you not seen that it is through God's grace that a ship travels in the sea so that He make you observe His signs? Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who is steadfast and grateful.

contrary, they should show patience in this trial and express gratitude on their blessings. This is the path of peace and only by treading it will they succeed. On the contrary, since God has been kind to them at this time, they are showing arrogance. In reality, this is a temporary phase that they are enjoying. If God seizes them now for some blemish, all their inebriation will end and they will feel ashamed and repent on their doings. However, this repentance will only be temporary. As soon as life becomes comfortable for them, they will return to their ill-ways. They should seek a lesson from the circumstances encountered by the passengers of a ship. If a person wants to remain steadfast in trials and grateful in comfort, he can learn a lot from them.

وَ اِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ؕ وَ مَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

This verse details out what is concisely stated in the previous verse: when a ship is sailing smoothly, its passengers do not even think that it is because God has provided it with propitious winds that has made their ship cut across the waves of the sea with such peace and calm. They regard this to be a result of their own ability and intelligence and become oblivious of God. Yet when suddenly stormy winds arise and huge waves engulf them, they remember God and invoke Him in every possible way and promise that in future they will remain obedient to Him. However, as soon as the ship reaches the coast very few of them adhere to their promise and adopt the middle path. Most of them turn out to be rebellious and ungrateful forgetting the signs of God and relapse into their previous wanderings.

After فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ the words to the effect وَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ كَافِرُوْن are suppressed. This suppression is unfolded by the later words: وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ. The word مُّقْتَصِدٌ refers to those who tread the path of truth and justice.

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31. And when waves like canopies envelop them, they invoke God promising to obey Him alone. Thus, when He brings them to safety and takes them to the land, some of them remain guided and others go astray. And only they deny Our revelations who always break promises and are ungrateful.

In the expression: وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ the word خَتَّارٍ is an exaggerated form of خَتْرٌ. It means someone who is unfaithful to the utmost and breaches promises in the most heinous way. These words are used in contrast to صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ of the previous verse. The word صَبَّار refers to people who remain steadfast on their covenant with God in all circumstances, and خَتَّار refers to people who remain indifferent to God when they receive His favours but in times of trial try to follow their covenant with God. Yet they adhere to this attitude as long as they encounter trials. As soon as they are over, they forget their promises with God. This is the most horrible form of rebellion against God. For such people, neither signs of God's favours nor any warning is effective.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ ۫ وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا ۭ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۪ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿۳۳﴾[32]

This is the final warning: people should protect themselves from God's wrath and punishment and should keep fearing the day on which neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor a son will be of any avail to his father. Each person will bear his or her own burden. The relationship between a father and a son is the closest. When they shall not be able to mutually benefit one another what to speak of others.

Here this style of the Qur'ānic verse should be noted that the meaning of "lack of benefit" has been conveyed in an emphatic manner. The words used are: وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا. Those who have a flare for the Arabic language know that the repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) and use of a noun in place of the verb has added a lot of stress in the sentence. In my opinion, the reason for this in the first place is that every father naturally expects from his son that in old age he will become his support and in the second place, a son with respect to his age and ability is more in a position to

32. O People! Fear that God may seize you and fear the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor the children will be able to benefit their father. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. So the life of the world should not deceive you nor should the deceiver deceive you about God.

help his frail father than vice versa. In the third place, because of young age a son has stronger sentiments of honour and civility. Yet in spite of all these aspects such will be the situation of indifference on that day that a son will not be able to be of any benefit to his father.

Here, we may take into consideration the circumstances of the times in which this verse was revealed. I have indicated while explaining Sūrah ‘Ankabūt and verse 15 of this *sūrah* that in those times fathers would forcibly stop their sons from accepting Islam and for this the elderly argument they gave to their sons was that they should follow their ways for on the Day of Judgement they will be responsible to God for the good and bad deeds their sons did. This verse is refuting this notion.

The words اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا imply that God’s promise is certain to be fulfilled. The Hereafter will come; hence the life of this world should not deceive them in this matter. Since this world is not based on the principle of reward and punishment and since good and evil both have been given respite in it and the adherents to evil seem to be more successful in this world, the foolish think that the threat of the Hereafter is a mere bluff. The verse states that this aspect should not cause any misconception. This world is a place of trials and tests.

The words وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ imply that this deceptive state of affairs should not lure people into any misconception about God that He has made this world without a purpose and is not concerned with the good and evil found in it. If someone has reached this conclusion, then it is totally wrong. One day will finally come when the complete justice of God Almighty will manifest itself. On that day, people who are in these misconceptions will end up in severe regrets. In Sūrah Infiṭār, the words used to convey this very meaning are: يَاأَيُّهَا الۡاِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الۡكَرِيۡمِ (٦:٨٢) (O man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord, (82:6))

The word غَرُوۡر is used not only for this deceptive world but also for Satan who deceives people. Here both these meanings are present. However, this much should be kept in mind that the words فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا allude to the deception one is led into viz a viz this world and the worlds وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ refer to the deception which the foolish are led into viz a viz God. As far as the philosophy of religion

is concerned, these are the two deceptions which are the foundation of all deviations from the truth.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنۡدَهٗ عِلۡمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَ يُنَزِّلُ الۡغَيۡثَ ۚ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا فِى الۡاَرۡحَامِ ؕ وَمَا تَدۡرِىۡ نَفۡسٌ مَّاذَا تَكۡسِبُ غَدًا ؕ وَمَا تَدۡرِىۡ نَفۡسٌۢ بِاَىِّ اَرۡضٍ تَمُوۡتُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۳۴﴾[33]

This verse is actually an immediate answer to a doubt or a question: whenever the opponents would be warned of the Day of Judgement, they would say: "when will it come? If it is to come, why has it not come as yet?" As a rejoinder to this question, it is said that only God knows its time of arrival. The lack of knowledge of the time of something cannot negate the existence that thing. There are so many aspects of life whose time and nature is not known but no sane person denies them. No one can deny the rain; yet its exact time and quantity and the place it comes to is not known to anyone. In these times, man has made many technological advancements and governments spend millions of rupees on the meteorological department yet the predictions of this department is mere conjecture and speculation. Similarly, no one can deny the pregnancy of a pregnant woman; yet what she will give birth to and when she will do so is only known to God. Likewise, no one knows that he will earn tomorrow, what obligations he will fulfill and in what circumstances and involvements he will lead his life. Such is the situation of the greatest of planners that they plan with great precaution and vigilantly abide by it; yet just as it is about to materialize a calamity strikes and ruins the whole program. What to speak of individuals, even governments plan with great care and confidence regarding the crops they will be producing the following year; yet change in weather conditions and rain disrupts their whole planning. Why go that far, the issue of life and death is very important for a person; yet who knows in which land he will die and where he will be buried. Many a time a person merrily leaves his house with only his corpse to return. At one place he is born, at

33. Only God has knowledge of the Hereafter and it is He Who sends down rain, and only He knows what is in the wombs and no one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor does anyone know in which land he will die. Indeed, God is all-knowing and all-aware.

another he lives and at still another place he dies. So when a person is not aware of such close-by realities – yet these are events no one can deny – how can the Day of Judgement become dubious if its time of arrival is not known?

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ state that God is the real knower and cognizant being. Only He knows when the Day of Judgement will come; yet it is sure to come. Each and every particle of this universe bears witness to its arrival.

On these lines ends the exegesis of this *sūrah*. و لله الحمد و المنة (all praise is for God; it is only His favour [we reap])

8 am Sunday
28th July 1974
Raḥmānābād

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